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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 003877

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2019

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: Minister of Interior Promotes Alternative Plan for Community Defense

Classified By: CDDEA: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne; reasons 1.4 b and d

REFTEL: Kabul 3661

11. (C) In a December 1 meeting with Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs Wayne, Interior Minister Atmar agreed with the basic U.S. proposal to fund and expand the Community Defense Initiative (CDI) intended to support villages that have demonstrated resistance to insurgents (see reftel). But he called for safeguards to enhance local ownership and responsibility and to ensure connectivity to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Pointing to Afghanistan's long tradition of community defense, Atmar opined that the United States finds it difficult to believe this centuries-old system can work. He said he strongly believes the defense systems must be limited to individual villages in order to inhibit a return to warlordism.

12. (C) The Interior Minister outlined his own version of a community defense program under which every village in Afghanistan has a four-to ten-man force reporting to village leaders and forming a Community Defense Council that would sign an agreement with the Afghan Government. Under this agreement, the Afghan Government would pay salaries directly to council members and license their weapons, which they would promise to use only within and in defense of their village. Salaries would be smaller than those for ANSF forces, and defense council members would be prohibited from combining with other villages. Councils would be able to call on the ANSF for help and receive training from U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF). Denying insurgents access to villages will severely weaken them, Atmar said. This program should be coupled with socio-economic support for the villages, he continued. He said he had met with ISAF leadership the night before to discuss his plan and proposed that after crafting an agreed text, it be presented to President Karzai for approval.

13. (C) In this connection, Atmar raised a 2009 incident in Nangarhar province in which a village leader mobilized his constituents against insurgents. After the leader's son and nephew were killed, Atmar complained that U.S. SOF took over the operation. He warned that such operations not linked to ANSF could have a "disastrous impact." (Note: USFOR-A has declared its intention to work with GIROA/ANSF on a transition plan bringing ANSF into every aspect of CDI operations. End note.)

Comment

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14. (C) The basic concept of providing support to communities that have demonstrated their own independent initiative to resist insurgents is proving to have support from key Afghan Ministries. Key Afghan ministers continue to speak of the need to refine the CDI concept - which USFOR-A considers to be at the pilot stage - before GIROA will formally approve the program. Post and USFOR-A agree on the need for a single GIROA ministry to take lead responsibility for community defense.

15. (C) USFOR-A leaders are concerned that paying salaries to local security forces creates an incentive to perpetuate a state of conflict and could cause community defense forces to fight for whoever pays them. Additionally, USFOR-A is not confident the

Ministry of Interior could pay these salaries on time. USFOR-A's CDI concept focuses its economic incentives on assistance to communities rather than payments to individuals.